

Last week I traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan to thank our troops for their service and to meet with the commander of U.S. and Allied forces, General Stanley McChrystal, as well as President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee charged with oversight over our military, I believe it is important to meet with commanders and troops on the ground involved in combat operations to fully understand the situation there. After visiting, I feel very optimistic about the continued American efforts in Afghanistan and our partnership with Pakistan.

Joining me on the Congressional Delegation trip were Senators Tom Carper, D-Del.; Tom Udall, D-N.M.; John Ensign, R-Nev., and Scott Brown, R-Mass. I thoroughly enjoyed traveling with my Senate colleagues and was proud to be a part of the delegation. Traveling with the Senators was a very valuable experience which allowed me to gain a unique perspective and better appreciation of the issues our nation faces around the globe.

While traveling, I had the opportunity to meet with many of our military service members and civilians deployed overseas, a number of whom were from the Commonwealth. It was an honor to be with them and to personally thank the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and civilians for the tremendous sacrifice they are making for us. To those of you reading this with loved ones or family members currently serving at home or abroad, please accept my sincerest appreciation for the sacrifices you also make each day to our nation.

All the troops we visited had extraordinarily high morale and they were optimistic about their mission, which I believe is reflective of the current military leadership and successes we are seeing in Afghanistan. It is truly a humbling experience to be with the troops on the ground and see the courage, tenacity, and dedication they demonstrate each day. As I have said before, I remained committed to ensuring we fully fund our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq to provide our service members with the proper resources they need to win.

My five-day trip began with a long flight from Washington, D.C. to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. From there, we spent two days in Afghanistan at Kabul and Kandahar, followed by two days in Pakistan at Islamabad and in western Pakistan, near Peshawar, and then flew back home through Doha, Qatar. Throughout the trip, I was able to see first-hand some of the tremendous progress that we are making in Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with some of the challenges that we face.

We met with many world leaders and high-level U.S. and foreign military officials throughout the trip. Just a few of these included: General Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan; Ambassador Eikenberry, the top U.S. Diplomat in Afghanistan; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; as well as President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan. General McChrystal was extremely insightful and he defined success in Afghanistan as the time and space to build and maintain a workable and effective government.

We spent more than an hour with President Karzai and asked many questions. Despite recent strained relations, I left feeling much better about the alliance between the U.S. and Afghanistan. During my meetings in Pakistan, the President and Prime Minister made it clear that they want to strengthen the relationship with Pakistan the U.S. beyond just the efforts to combat terrorism.

During my trip, I also kept a detailed journal of my meetings and travels so I could keep you better informed. Next week, I will be updating my website daily with those journal entries. Please visit [www.wittman.house.gov](http://www.wittman.house.gov) to read those updates next week. To view this week's Senate press conference where I discuss the trip, visit <http://www.c-spanarchives.org/program/id/222431>

I was pleased to be able to attend this trip on behalf of the people of the First District and I can assure folks that the information we learned from interactions with world leaders, U.S. Military leaders, our uniformed and civilian personal, and the citizens of the foreign countries was invaluable. Most importantly, this trip was critical to me because it gave me the chance to thank our servicemen and women for their service to and sacrifice for our country.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee, where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*